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EDITOR'S NOTE



Jonathan Kuo



Rosa Lee

Scientists have always been concerned about origins. Questions about the origins of life, for example, have guided many areas of biological research for centuries. In physics, inquiries into origins have traditionally tended toward the cosmological; that is, toward investigating the genesis of the universe. Indeed, the scientific method—often described as the harbinger of the modern age of science—is the result of an almost monolithic focus on origins; it is a way of thinking that seeks to produce knowledge by distinguishing the original from the new.

Thinking through the lens of emergence, however, is an invitation to focus not only on origins, but to trace the threads that link origins to destinations. And as science journalists, our creed can almost be summarized in this curious process. As journalists, we seek to bring to light topics that often resist being made visible, concepts that have a muddled (or even absent) appearance in the public consciousness. Through writing, we capture snapshots of the present and glide along its connections to the past and the future, in hopes of understanding where we've come from, and to where we might go.

In this issue, our writers travel through origins, destinations, and everything in between. We continue conversations with scientific experts about the COVID-19 pandemic and hear their thoughts on long COVID, vaccine education, and emerging viral variants. In “Bringing Philosophy into Scientific Research,” Marley Ottoman revisits the divide between the humanities and the sciences in order to envision how ideas like emergence theory may motivate interdisciplinary work for scientists and philosophers alike. Each of our departments covers the latest technologies in a variety of contexts—ranging from features pieces on ‘microscopic astronauts’ and assembloids, interviews discussing AlphaFold and CRISPR, and original research designing underwater autonomous vehicles—to envision how emerging technologies might shape our future.

As a journal, we too have been considering how to respond to new channels for information emerging in our modern media ecosystem. This semester, we launched our monthly newsletter, which serves to introduce subscribers to our writing teams and provide updates on our pieces throughout the year. We updated our practices for processing blog pitches and research submissions to streamline work with our writers. And in a conversation with writer Elena Conis, our students received tips on how to speak with the press to ensure their own research is represented accurately.

Emergence, for us, has given us a chance to imagine what our future might look like, at a time when the future seems so uncertain. Reader, as you flip through the pages of the Spring 2021 issue of our journal, we invite you to do the same—to reflect on the present moment and imagine what tomorrow will bring.

Jonathan Kuo
Editor-in-Chief

Rosa Lee
Managing Editor